

Committee on Planting
January 19, 2011, Dept. of Public Works

Attendees: David Davis, Michael Hanlon, Co-Chairs; David Lefcourt, Emily Axelrod, Maggie Booz, Janet Burns, Mauricio Gomez, Chantal Eide, Kathleen Kelly, Margrit Betke, Denise Heintze, Florrie Wescoat, Maddy McDowell, E. Thomas Flynn, Nancy Philip, Megan Brook and Carolyn Mathews

Minutes from the previous meeting were unanimously approved with the addition of M. McDowell being noted as an attendee.

1. Silver Maple Forest Site

David Lefcourt and others on the Committee members updated the group on the Silver Maple Forest site on Rte. 2.

- The proposed development would include 298 units of 40B affordable housing on the site.
- This proposed private development site is within the City of Belmont, but has requested sewer and water service from Cambridge, due to proximity to Fresh Pond and existing Cambridge infrastructure.
- If Cambridge does permit hook up to city water supply, Cambridge would receive in return much needed improvements to the sewage and water system in that area.
- It is more expensive for the applicant to secure water and sewer service from Belmont, though they are legally entitled to such.
- The Belmont Conservation Committee earlier rejected the project, but the Department of Environmental Protection overturned their decision.
- The site is contiguous to portions of the Alewife Reservation and there are both environmental concerns and flooding concerns related to its development.
- Although there was a proposal for the state to acquire the site, that proposal expired on January 14 without the Governor's signature. The state is, however, proceeding with a full appraisal of the property.

Action Items:

- Janet Burns to contact Jenn Wright of the Cambridge Conservation Commission to see what position they have taken on the project.
- Planting Committee will then consider who should appear to brief the group further in order to determine whether the Planting Committee should take a position on the issue.

2. CPP Sponsored Forestry Publication

David Lefcourt introduced the subject and mentioned that he would like to have this publication in hand for the spring science fair, late April and first week of May, and that it would have to be ready for printing in early April.

Maggie Booz presented the outline she had prepared for the piece, and received feedback on that list.

Several points were made about the publication:

- It should be a simple trifold brochure, which David and others could hand out, or that would be mailed out, outlining 5-10 major points relating to tree acquisition and maintenance.
- It should be reviewed by the Cambridge Environmental Commission and others once text is drafted and before publication.
- It is important to be clear about the audience, and not try and cover all issues in the brochure.

- More detailed information will have to be developed along with the brochure, and should be posted on the web site. Note: It is important that the web and brochure info be consistent and complementary.
- It should have some introductory text about the number of trees in Cambridge, and the vital environmental functions they serve in the urban environment. It should also include some scientific information about Co2 and the quantifiable contribution of trees to clean air.
- The brochure should be worded in a positive and welcoming style, without a lot of prohibitions and negative language.

Action Items:

- Maggie will obtain factual information needed from the DPW and others and will construct a first draft
- Emily A. will edit the first draft
- Goal is to present something to the Committee by February meeting.

3. Door Hanger Text

Kathleen presented two versions of edits to the text for the door hanger, with the objective of appealing to those who know nothing about trees or planting. There are others who still wish to add input, and that can still be done, as the new text is not needed for the coming planting season.

Discussion items:

- Whether to mention planting of annuals in tree wells, with a consensus not to mention the subject as it pertains to so few instances.
- Important to emphasize that tree well fencing or raised borders are a tripping hazard and not consistent with city policy.
- Work on mulch wording (bark mulch) to explain more what it is and add additional information on web site.

Action:

- Email any further wording suggestions to Kathleen.

5. Arborist Update

- Tree hearing next Wednesday at 5:30 to deal with removal of 2 Honeylocusts at Mass Ave. and Beech. They will be replaced by 6 new trees, by the developer, and are currently planned as American Elms. There was discussion of whether this was the best tree for that difficult location, and it was agreed to continue the tree selection discussion until next meeting.
- Street tree pruning is ongoing by Cambridge Landscape.
- Northern Tree will begin cemetery and Fresh Pond Golf course clean up after storm and related removal.

6. Other Business

- Dave Davis and others mentioned again that it would be great to create a "Year of the Tree" or some other tree awareness campaign through images on parking permits, stickers, etc. The idea of a photo contest was also mentioned.

- Emily Axelrod noted that there is currently planning work underway for street improvements to Mass Ave between Waterhouse St. and Porter Square, and that the Committee should be aware of those efforts and street trees are involved. She will ask Ron Axelrod to write an update letter to the Committee.